

THE BOOK OF FIRST THESSALONIANS

"Paul's Message To Thessalonica"

1 Thessalonians 2:1-2

Introduction

1. The Book of 1 Thessalonians is divided into three major sections: The Church (chap. 1), The Apostle (chaps. 2-3), and The Believer (chaps. 4-5). Thessalonica serves to demonstrate the Model Church, the Model Servant, and the Model Believer. It is a book worthy of sincere study.

2. The church called forth Paul's highest acclaim and thanks (1:2-4). It also enjoyed wonderful "happenings" (1:5-7). It was the subject of a tremendous testimony (1:8-10).

3. The work at Thessalonica, however, was the work under God of one special servant of God--Paul. The message he brought is carefully indicated in the text. His total manner as a man of God is also outlined in the chapters designated (2-3). His message included the following:

1. SUCCESS v. 1.

a. Acknowledged

This is marked by the verb "known." It is the common verb for know innately. The reflexive pronoun used with the second person plural of the verb shows that there is a distinct knowledge here. It is like a call to testify. The believers are called "brethren," a distinct word for those in God's family alone.

b. Related

The success of which Paul speaks here concerns his own entrance into the arena of evangelization at Thessalonica. The word "entrance" has already been used by Paul (1:9) and is the opposite of exodus (eisodos). The repetition of the article with the prepositional phrase accents the relation of the phrase to the noun "entrance." It was of a peculiar sort.

c. Described

This is the key to noting success in this verse for

Paul in his ministry at Thessalonica. The word "vain" captures the significance of a Greek word meaning empty or hollow (cf. 1 Cor. 15:58). The idea of quality is dominant in this word. Another Greek term refers to the fruitlessness and ineffectiveness of work performed (Titus 3:9; 1 Cor. 15:17). Hence, Paul claims his witness at Thessalonica was of good quality and not hollow. The force of the verb "was" is heightened in that it is a perfect tense of the same verb previously rendered "came" (1:5), hence the entrance was "found" or "has not come to be" anything but success (cf. John 15:16).

2. SECRET v. 2.

a. Treated

Paul is direct in stating that he has suffered experiences of a severe nature. The verb "suffer before" is only used here in the New Testament. The compound verb speaks of events prior to the present. The accent on previous events is carried over to the next verb, "shamefully entreated." This includes personal indignities as well as physical sufferings. The passive voice of the verb shows that Paul did not actively seek this treatment, but endured it and its memory still moved him. A full list of Paul's experiences is given elsewhere (2 Cor. 11:16-33).

b. Agreed

Paul appealed to the knowledge of the Thessalonians on several occasions (1:5, 8; 2:1, 5, 10, 11; 2 Thess. 2:16; 3:1, 2). It was no secret that Paul had gone through mire and muck for the sake of the Gospel. When believers know the treatment of His servants, they should all the more be grateful for their evangelization.

c. Resulted

This is the focal secret of Paul's message at Thessalonica. He was "bold in God" to preach. This verb is always used with reference to preaching the Gospel in the New Testament (Acts 9:27, 29; 13:46; 14:3; 18:26; 19:8; 26:26; Eph. 6:20). The root of the verb means to "tell the full story" or "full speech." The idea of openness and freedom of utterance are obvious to the word. The ingressive aorist form can well be rendered "waxed" or "began to be bold." The insults and sufferings did not

deter him from preaching, rather they spurred him on. It is the same thought as "the blood of the martyrs has become the seed of the church." So Paul's success was boldness in God, not in self, but in the Lord!

3. SUBJECT v. 2.

a. Content

It was the Gospel which Paul spoke at Thessalonica. It is true that this word means "good news," but it is of a certain sort. This was the gospel of grace (Eph. 2:8, 9). There is the gospel of the kingdom (Matt. 4:23) which concerns the coming millennial period. There is also the eternal gospel (Rev. 14:6) which is a generic term for what has always been God's good news for the world. The "another gospel" (Gal. 1:6) of course refers to that which is not the true gospel, but a false teaching.

b. Source

Paul notes that the Gospel is of God. This means that He is the Source for it. Paul was so related to it that he referred to it as "our gospel" (1:5). In any case, it is a heavenly message which men on earth sorely need.

c. Concern

The ministry of the Gospel at Thessalonica was not an easy task. It involved much suffering and distress (v. 2). But Paul specifically notes that in his actual speaking, it was also done with "much contention." This word means conflict. Transliterated, the word means agony. Paul had both external and internal conflict in this ministry (cf. Phil. 1:30; Col. 2:1). This word is rendered fight (1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:7) and race (Heb. 12:1). The verb form is used of sports (1 Cor. 9:25) and to fight like soldiers (John 18:36).

Conclusion What a blessed summary of Paul's entrance into Thessalonica with the Gospel of God! He had true spiritual success. The secret of this is to be found in the boldness he experienced in God. He had but one message for the people: God's good news. There was opposition to this message and always will be. Sowing the Seed of the Gospel must not depend upon the birds of Satan. They will destroy the seed, but it must be sown to get results. God help us to preach like Paul and see heaven populated!